

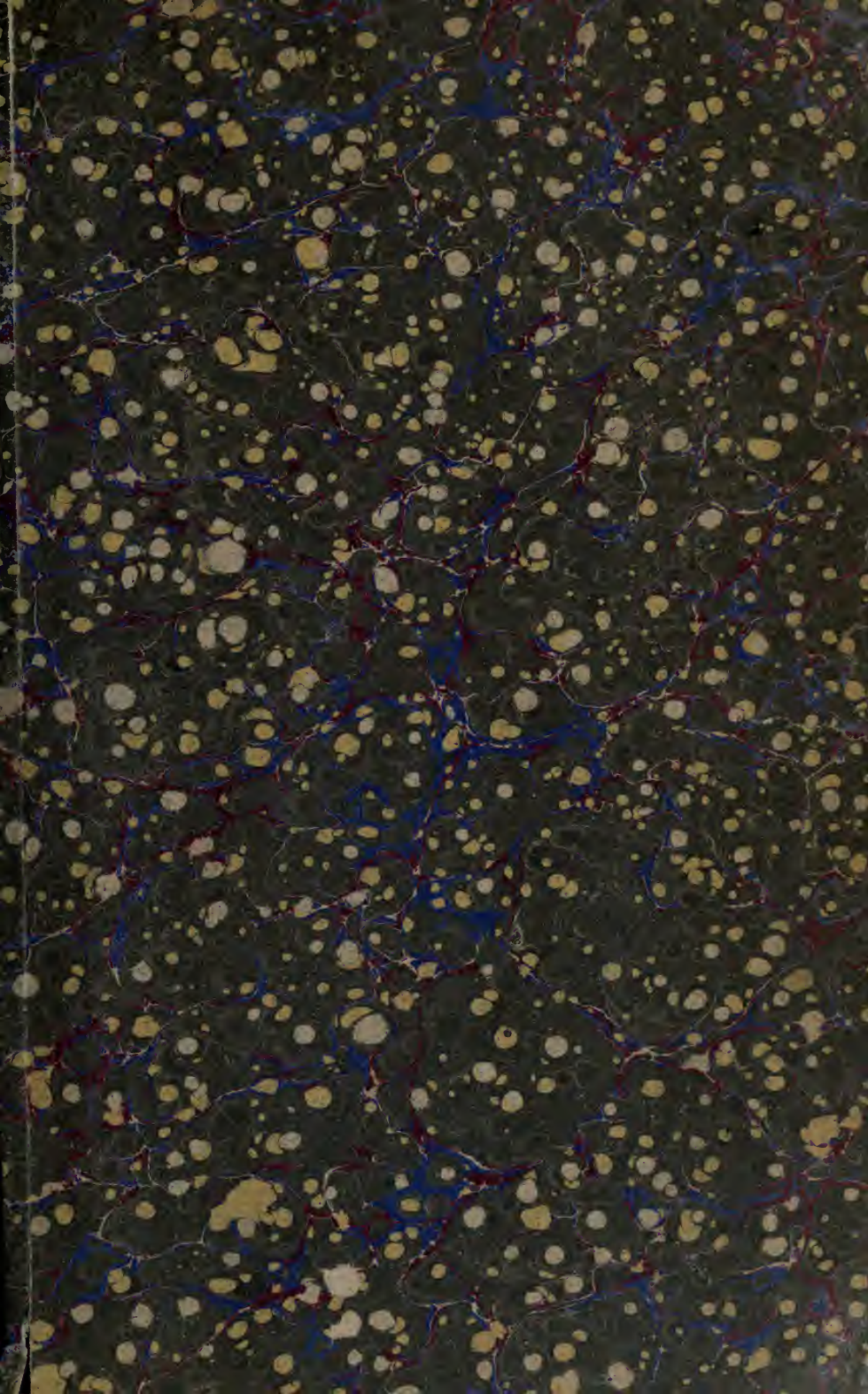


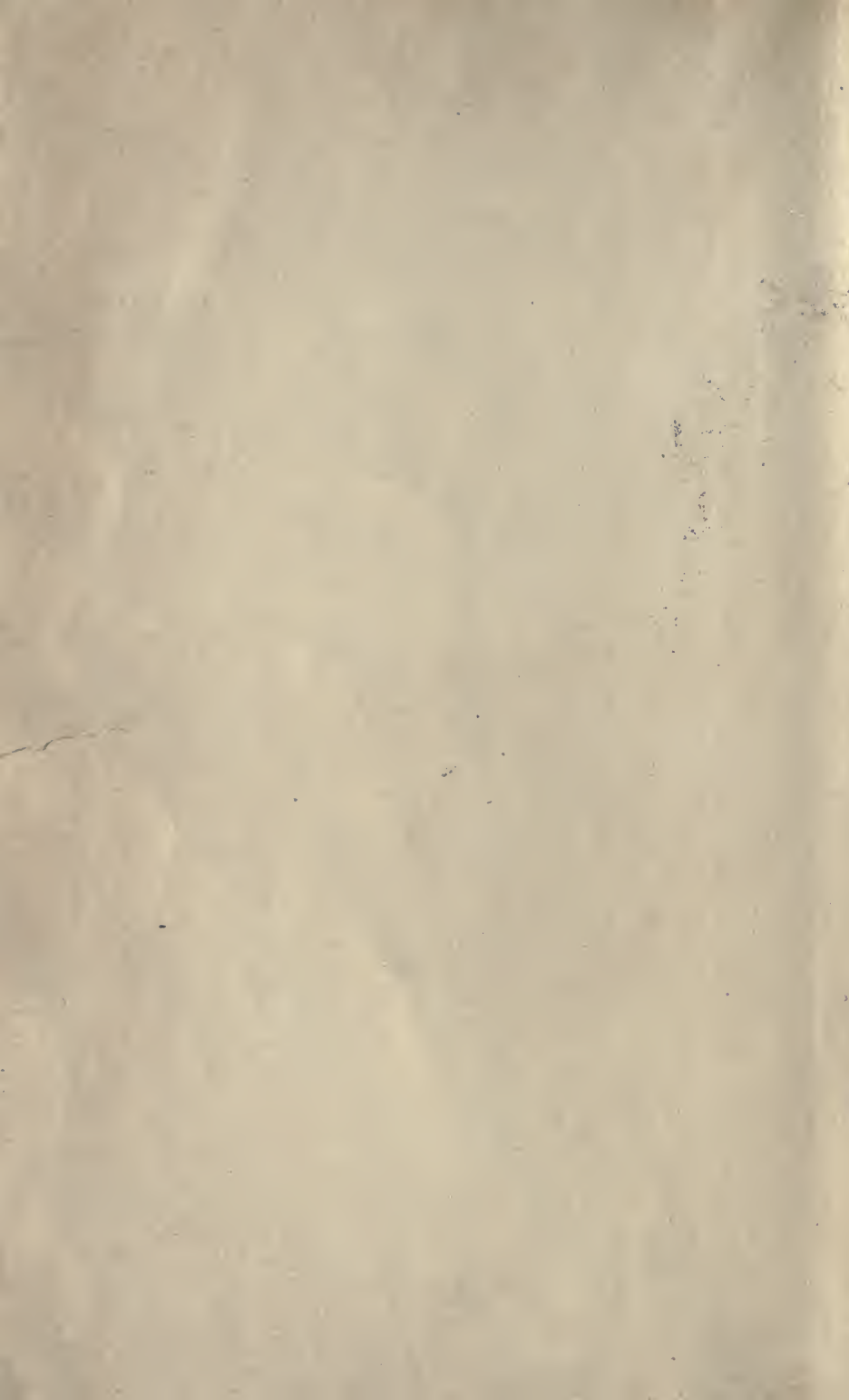
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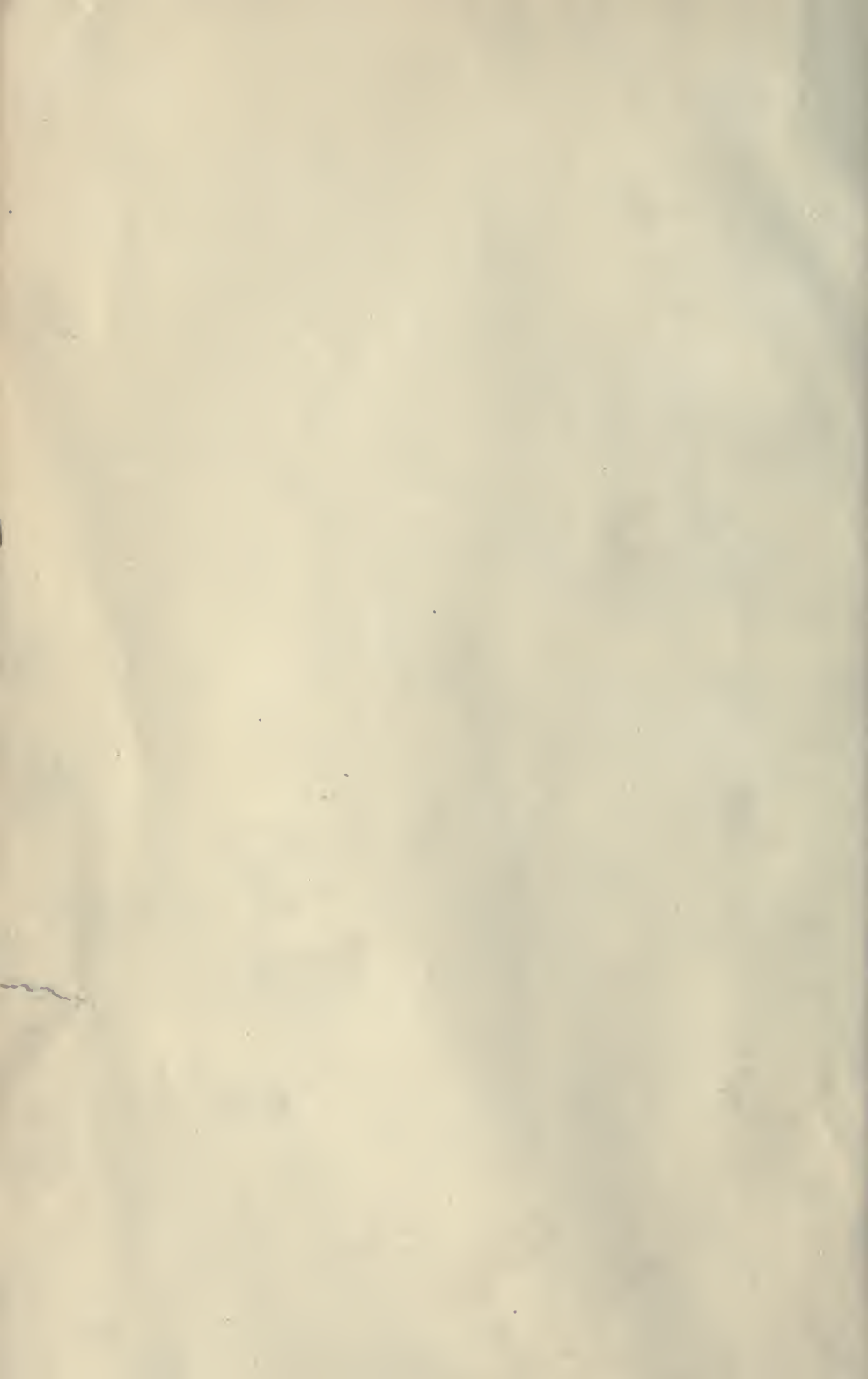
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3. Chittenden, Hon. S. B. A dishonest silver dollar cheats the laboring man... Speech May 8, 1879. Wash. 1879. 10p.
4. Crawford, F. Marion. Our silver. A letter addressed to George S. Lore. N. Y. 1881. 27p.
5. Garnett, L. R. Rapid decline ~~of~~ in the production of precious metals in the United States. ... S. F. 1869. 60p.
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A DISHONEST SILVER DOLLAR CHEATS
THE LABORING MAN

AND
ENRICHES SPECULATORS.

SPEECH

OF

HON. S. B. CHITTENDEN,

OF NEW YORK,

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1879.

*Free coinage of silver a mistake. Sure to result in
disappointment, disaster, and deep disgrace.*

WASHINGTON.
1879.

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S P E E C H
OF
HON. S. B. CHITTENDEN.

The House having under consideration the bill (H. R. No. 564) to amend certain sections of the Revised Statutes of the United States relating to coinage and coin and bullion certificates, and for other purposes—

Mr. CHITTENDEN said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I regard the bill under consideration, which provides for the free coinage of silver and the free issue of coin certificates, the latter to be circulated as money and employed by the national banks as a part of their reserve, as the most violent and inexcusable assault upon the integrity and welfare of the American people ever made in Congress. I propose, therefore, by an honest effort, to turn on the light and expose the covert idiocy and rascality of the measure. I do not intend to transgress the rules of the House, but if I chance to use the wrong word, I rely upon the Chair to rule as he did the other day, that "as a man thinketh so is he;" nor do I wish to be interrupted. When I get through I will accept battle, under the rules of the House, with all-comers, one at a time.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, that when I shall have taken my seat fresh raids upon gold bugs will be in regular order. I have also observed that these manifestations have been more lively and interesting than usual in the Forty-sixth Congress. In other Congresses the leaders of the people against their oppressors have been men comparatively unworthy of notice, but in this the champion belt is deservedly worn by a recognized minister of the church of God. It will be conceded, I am sure, that the honorable and reverend gentleman from Indiana cuts a ludicrous figure here as a missionary of woe! woe! to the "money power," while laboring at the same time as the beloved apostle and high priest of the greenbackers. From the Clerk's desk he prayed the other day, with some reserve, that the good Lord would take us all to heaven, and straightway in a frantic effort from his own seat to make it warm for infamous and hell-bent bondholders he himself got red-hot and cried out in dreadful agony for—

Men who have honor—men who will not lie;
Tall men—sun-crowned—who live above the fog
In public duty and private thinking;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking.

At another time he is said to have prayed in secret through the petition-box for "a thousand million of greenbacks" in one grand swoop, ostensibly to resurrect some defunct western canal companies. I

am glad, Mr. Speaker, to see this unique quasi-divine in his seat. He belongs to a class who rarely hear preaching and who suffer severely for want of it. The average minister is Pope in his own pulpit. Not so here. The gentleman's gospel will not be accepted in this Hall without an occasional challenge. I would not discourage the gentleman. I have hopes of him. It is said already that he repents of his thousand million job; and if he owns a conscience we shall soon find him upon the anxious bench, and after that conviction and conversion to the religion of common sense may be looked for.

Mr. Speaker, I have but few words to say in answer to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. WARNER] who opened this debate. His speech, though four days old, only come to the light this morning, and I do not know yet how he has fixed it. His answer to my question left a chasm between us too broad to bridge with argument. He declared that irredeemable legal-tender paper promises issued for a portion of the war debt are as good money as gold or silver. If that be true the United States owe no man anything to be paid. If he is right, fiat money, inflation, immoderate speculation, extravagant and riotous living, consequent bankruptcy, monstrous speculations, and repudiation are no longer to be regarded as the diseased attendants of a cruel civil war to be cured, but they are to be respected and exalted as the climax of prosperity, as the normal condition and true indices of American progress and civilization. If he is right, temperance, industry, frugal living, the payment of honest debt, tact for business, and accumulations of property are heresies and devices of thieves and robbers deserving of condemnation by all good men. But I take issue with the gentleman. His argument at best is that of all unfortunate, improvident, prodigal men, who demand that Government shall by some hocus-pocus currency legislation restore their broken fortunes. That is all there is of it. Debt is not money. He himself knows that it is not. He cannot stand on that ground to restore assured prosperity to this country any more than he can build a railway on the ice of a deep river in winter time and hope to operate it securely through the heats of summer.

I admit that I speak as a capitalist. Yes, I am a "robber," if the gentleman's doctrine is sound. I worked two full days, twenty-four hours, in my thirteenth year for the first dollar I ever called my own, and I have been a robber, on the gentleman's theory, from that time to this. Nevertheless, I assert my brotherhood with every man in the land who owns an honest hoe, horse, house, farm, bond, bank, railroad, or steamship, provided their capital, great or small, is the fruit of honest work and savings. Every industrious and temperate man in this country makes money; but it requires common sense and tact to save something and be a capitalist.

Congress does not and cannot properly make capitalists or bankrupts. The father of a family who teaches his sons to come late to breakfast, to study and work short hours, to spend habitually more money than they earn, to buy land and build houses and mortgage the same for more than they are worth in honest money, to run in debt without sense and without reflection, to take flyers at the stock exchange, to bet at the races and keep company with harlots, will raise a family of dead-beats who will need and clamor for fiat money, as the old feudal lords did, to conceal laziness, foolhardiness, and rascality.

On the other hand, take one of these pages who run at our bidding, the son of a widow perhaps; herself the daughter of affluence, gentle and cultivated, whose husband died for his country; that boy earns

a dollar a day, more or less. If he is wise enough to spend less than he earns he is as truly a capitalist as I am, and he may stand thirty years hence where I now stand to deplore the folly of misguided and egotistical men, who by tampering with honest money in the Forty-sixth Congress threaten to mar their country's prosperity and glory with utopian dreams and schemes for half a century. "By the sweat of thy brow," Mr. Speaker, "shalt thou eat bread." Honest work, honest money, honest bread. That is the fiat of the unchangeable Jehovah, put in force when rogues first appeared in Paradise. Ceaseless cycles of time have established its wisdom and beneficence. It shall stand for ever and ever!

Against God's law the silver and greenback sinners of our time have brought back and set up in our country the Flaminian law of the old Roman Republic, passed, in the words of a recent French writer, "when Hannibal was already at the gates of Rome; when the disasters of Trebia and of Lake Trasimene had well-nigh exhausted the resources of the republic; when there was revolt on every hand, and thus the best sources of public revenue were dried up."

It is curiously instructive for us to note that the *lex Flaminia* of the Roman Republic, centuries before the Christian era and long before paper money was invented, reduced Roman silver coins precisely as the Forty-fifth Congress of the United States clipped the honest dollar of the United States in the year of grace 1878.

The history of these two acts is very interesting. Their analogy is close and searching, but not absolutely perfect. In the old case Hannibal was outside the gate when the deed was done. In our case Hannibal was inside, and assisted at the clipping. The precedent proved fatal to Rome. We still have room for repentance.

The Romans first reduced their denarius from one seventy-second to one eighty-fourth of a pound, then to one-ninetieth. Later on the Greeks and Romans descended to plated coin, and amid the greatest confusion they tried at length the "goloid," the very mixture which the distinguished gentleman from Georgia, the chairman of the Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures, now admires and recommends. The Roman laws being nowhere preserved textually, the fact can only be corroborated by the bare statement of historians as to the "scaling" of Roman silver coins, but it is a reasonable assumption that "electrum" (our goloid) was popular, for the convenient reason that it favored rascals and fostered fraud. No expert can tell to-day without chopping and melting up each individual coin what the thing is made of.

Cicero tells us that the value of the coinage at the time to which I refer became so dubious that no one knew what he was worth. A writer of less note observes:

We might always judge of the character of the Roman emperors by the more or less sound ring of the coin struck during their reign.

This is not hyperbole, Mr. Speaker. Near the close of the nineteenth century, we stand here to-day the representatives of the freest, richest, happiest, and most prosperous people on the face of the earth; a people day by day proclaiming by some fresh exhibition of reserved power their sure destiny as the central force in the world's future advancement and triumphs; here we are, with our cables, railroads, and mines, blind to our real resources and opportunities, wildly croaking and wrangling like selfish, lazy, and spoiled children over the wrecks of foolish castles in the air, themselves the outcome of passion and civil war; here we are, in possession of matchless power, foolishly striving to repeat with startling exactness

fatal currency devices which sapped and subverted the Roman Republic two thousand years ago, and, traveling down the ages, have impoverished or ruined every nation and people copying them. This is not argument, but it is the truth of history or it is falsehood. If true, it goes without argument, and admonishes every one of us, Representatives of the people, to persist no longer in this broad road to ruin.

What, then, Mr. Speaker, is the true import of the bill under consideration?

Let me premise explicitly that I am not opposed to bimetalism, but for it whenever practicable. I have never said a word against the coinage of honest silver dollars. But while the leading great nations with whom we trade adhere to the gold standard common sense and public policy force us, in my judgment, to stand with them unless we mean to adopt silver as our only standard. I hold, and think it easy to demonstrate, that our present coinage law, unless modified, will certainly force upon us an exclusive silver standard. I regard our dishonored and justly imprisoned silver dollar of $412\frac{1}{2}$ grains as the most disgraceful form of political money. It is as corrupt and corrupting in principle as it would be if containing but the odd $12\frac{1}{2}$ grains of silver. Its moral quality when compared with irredeemable greenbacks reflects the difference between a man born prodigal and reprobate, and a good character wrecked after an honorable career.

I repeat, there is no valid objection to coining honest silver dollars; but for Congress to say that $412\frac{1}{2}$ grains of silver shall pass for a dollar now because in other days when the metal was less abundant that number of grains was worth a dollar is as ridiculous and impolitic as it would be for farmers to insist upon war prices for cotton, wheat, and meat in this time of superabundance. The proof of this proposition is at hand if we will but look at it. It will be admitted that beyond narrow limits our silver dollars are now locked up in dark vaults, useless and a burden, practically outlawed precisely as any other product of our soil or mines would be outlawed in commerce if overvalued and only vendible by short weights and measures.

If the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. CLYMER] should arbitrarily say that he would give only eighteen hundred weight of rails for a ton would the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. NEWBERRY] buy the other gentleman's rails? What will become of Mr. CLYMER's rails in such case? They will be stacked up unemployed, at great loss to Mr. CLYMER, precisely as our silver dollars are locked up at great loss to Government. But you say Mr. CLYMER can issue certificates and borrow money on his rails. True, but he knows that will ruin him double-quick, because he as an individual has no power to make his certificates go without interest; he will therefore lose the interest upon his capital and his notes as well.

If the State of Pennsylvania should make eighteen hundred weight of iron legal tender for a ton in all transactions between her own citizens, would not such idiocy manifestly tend to cripple and destroy the Keystone State's commerce with other States? Why, then, shall the Government of the United States arbitrarily convert the product of its precious silver mines into a standard of coin unknown beyond our borders, useless and rejected at home, tending only to dwarf, cripple, and disturb our great commerce with the world?

And what shall be said of free coinage? The free coinage bill which passed the House of Representatives on the 4th of November, 1877, without a word of debate, 164 to 34, originated in a committee of which I was a member.

It is an open secret that its authors aimed by it to drive all the gold out of the country. They opposed resumption with all their power, and did not believe there was any gold in the country worth talking about. They distrusted the Treasury statement of gold coin held by the sub-treasury in New York, and on my motion we obtained authority to see it counted, and did so to our entire satisfaction. The free coinage bill failed and resumption came, according to the law of January 14, 1875, to the great and manifest advantage of the whole people. Why shall we remorselessly break down resumption now? What is the true meaning of free coinage? I only have time to answer the last question.

Free coinage means that whoever owns 412½ grains of silver, and multiples thereof, whether in old coin, furniture, or bullion, can sell the same to the Government of the United States for the equivalent of gold dollars, and be paid therefor in three or four days after depositing the silver in any assay office or mint in our country. This proposal to buy by the Government is not confined to our own citizens, but extends to the silver hoards of all countries and all mankind. The authors and promoters of this monstrous proposition claim that it is in the interest of the people. What people? I affirm deliberately that it is in the interest of bullionists and capitalists exclusively, and will demonstrate it.

We have already coined and locked up for the most part thirty-one millions of the silver dollar of 412½ grains. For what end? For whose benefit? Is there one farmer, mechanic, or day laborer, save only those employed at the mints, who has made a cent out of this coinage? Not one. Who, then? The first seven millions of bullion coined into these dishonest dollars was purchased in London because the bullionists of the Pacific coast rudely proposed to "corner" the market. So far, and to the extent of seven millions, the coinage was for the sole benefit of foreign bullionists. Subsequently the supplies have been purchased at home for the exclusive benefit of home producers.

Now let us see how other capitalists than bullionists are interested in this bill. I ask the honorable gentlemen reporting it to give me their attention while I explain how it will work in practice. The railroad king, Mr. Vanderbilt, is said to have bought lately twelve thousand tons of steel rails in England, which, for convenience, I assume will cost him, duty paid, in New York the round sum of \$500,000. To bring the argument home, I will further assume that Mr. Vanderbilt's note for \$500,000 is held and due to the honorable chairman of the committee reporting this bill, [Mr. STEPHENS,] payable by contract on the 1st day of June next. Let this bill become a law by the 15th of May, and under its operation Mr. Vanderbilt can and will step into the cable office, direct his agent in London to purchase for him silver bullion, which, at the present market value, cannot cost to exceed \$430,000, freight paid, and which by the ordinary conveyance will reach the assay office in New York in time to pay in full Mr. Vanderbilt's note to Mr. STEPHENS for \$500,000 at a saving to Mr. Vanderbilt of \$70,000?

Again, this law is, on its face, the most gigantic job in the interest of great capitalists ever proposed in Congress since the foundation of the Government. It is a plain, direct stimulant to speculation in the hoards of depreciated silver in Europe, and if our surplus gold income were two millions per day instead of one, as the accounts show it to have been last year, it would all be invested in silver so long as any margin of profit remained, however small. At the price of silver in London to-day the profit in importing it would, under this bill, be

about 17 per cent. It is especially noteworthy that the bill as it stands bids nearly 2 per cent. premium on thirty-six million of our so-called trade-dollars, nearly all of which are hidden at the present moment in China, Japan, or elsewhere! Whose wool is that? Bullion value eighty-five cents. Political value one hundred and two cents! Difference, \$6,120,000! Who is to get that?

Again, it is made absolutely certain, by laws as immutable as the set of the tides of the ocean, that under the operation of this bill, Germany, in the hands of the "vacant-minded and weak-willed Bismarck," will directly or indirectly convert her demonetized silver into our gold! Such is the climax of its sublime impolicy; such the inevitable result of all measures for the establishment of a double standard unsupported by other nations.

It is easy to show how this bill will oppress and rob the people of our own country, in whose name it is ostentatiously brought forward. The value of our cotton, wheat, petroleum, and all other products of labor at home depends upon their gold value abroad. We cannot if we try sell our surplus by any other than a gold standard. Is there any reason why hard-handed men in Ohio and Georgia shall be forced to receive for their labor debased political currency? Why should the cotton and grain grown in these great States be paid for in dollars worth but eighty-five cents, while the merchant to whom these products are sold is paid in dollars worth one hundred cents as soon as his ship touches a foreign port?

The men who own and drive carts in Brooklyn and New York, in sight of ships engaged in foreign trade, understand my argument. I can summon hundreds of them here who will tell you with feeling how your coinage act of last year will oppress them if persisted in, and that this bill for free coinage is in the interest of genuine "gold bugs" and political dead-beats only, and no better than highway robbery of labor.

I conclude my comments on silver coinage as I began. Make your silver dollar honest weight, and I make no objection to free coinage—not a word of objection!

I have not overlooked that vicious section of the bill which provides for the issue of a new variety of paper money equal in amount to all the coin and bullion (hundreds of millions) which may flow into the Treasury under its operation, but have no time to speak of it.

Let me, in concluding, Mr. Speaker, ask the House to look back with candor for a moment to the beginning of the currency struggle. Eighteen years ago there was not a man of influence, in Congress or out of Congress, to be found advocating legal-tender greenbacks except as a temporary war measure. Not one! What means this? Were our merchants, bankers, economists, lawyers, statesmen, and jurists all mistaken then? Or has the greenback poison already driven this great nation to the brink of ruin? Consider now some of the bills before this Congress.

Here comes one brought in by a minister of the Gospel asking for a thousand millions of legal-tenders in one lot. Here is another from the genial gentleman from Iowa [Mr. WEAVER] who modestly asks for six hundred millions. There is my friend from Pennsylvania [Mr. WRIGHT] who, having passed three score and ten, is more modest still; he demands only four hundred millions. That makes two thousand millions thus far asked for by three members of "the party of the future," which boldly claims the democracy for its tail.

It is understood that the "national" party of this House is for the present limited to fourteen or fifteen members. If three members re-

quire two thousand millions it will require ten thousand millions to go round, without providing for the appendix.

Moreover, we have a daring and belligerent member from Alabama speaking through the newspapers for legal-tenders enough to pay off the interest-bearing portion of the national debt immediately; and it is understood that a number of less warlike advanced thinkers in the House favor that idea. Finally, and to cap the column, I myself have been requested by a New York greenbacker to push a bill through the House providing that every father of a family who will take the trouble to register his name at the United States Treasury shall have, in monthly installments, all he requires (under oath) to support his family respectably.

Admit that these propositions are all alike ridiculous, what then? Are they not danger signals? What would have been said eighteen years ago of any man standing in this Hall to offer such bills as those which have already been offered? Are they not the result, the logical and inevitable result, of tampering with our standard of money in Congress? Where will we be if these debates go on ten years more? Go to the river and harbor bills of the last two Congresses, passed without consideration or debate, for my answer to that question. I firmly believe that if the war loan represented by legal-tenders be dallied with longer in Congress bills for fresh issues of greenbacks will be log-rolled and run in parallel lines with river and harbor bills, gathering as they go every scheme of folly and wickedness, on and on together, year after year, from bad to worse, from hundreds to thousands of millions, until our Government shall topple and crumble in ruins!

Said one of the most influential of democrats, once, and not long ago, a member of this body, to me the other day:

The legal-tender question is greater than the currency. It will destroy our form of government in the end if they are issuable in time of peace.

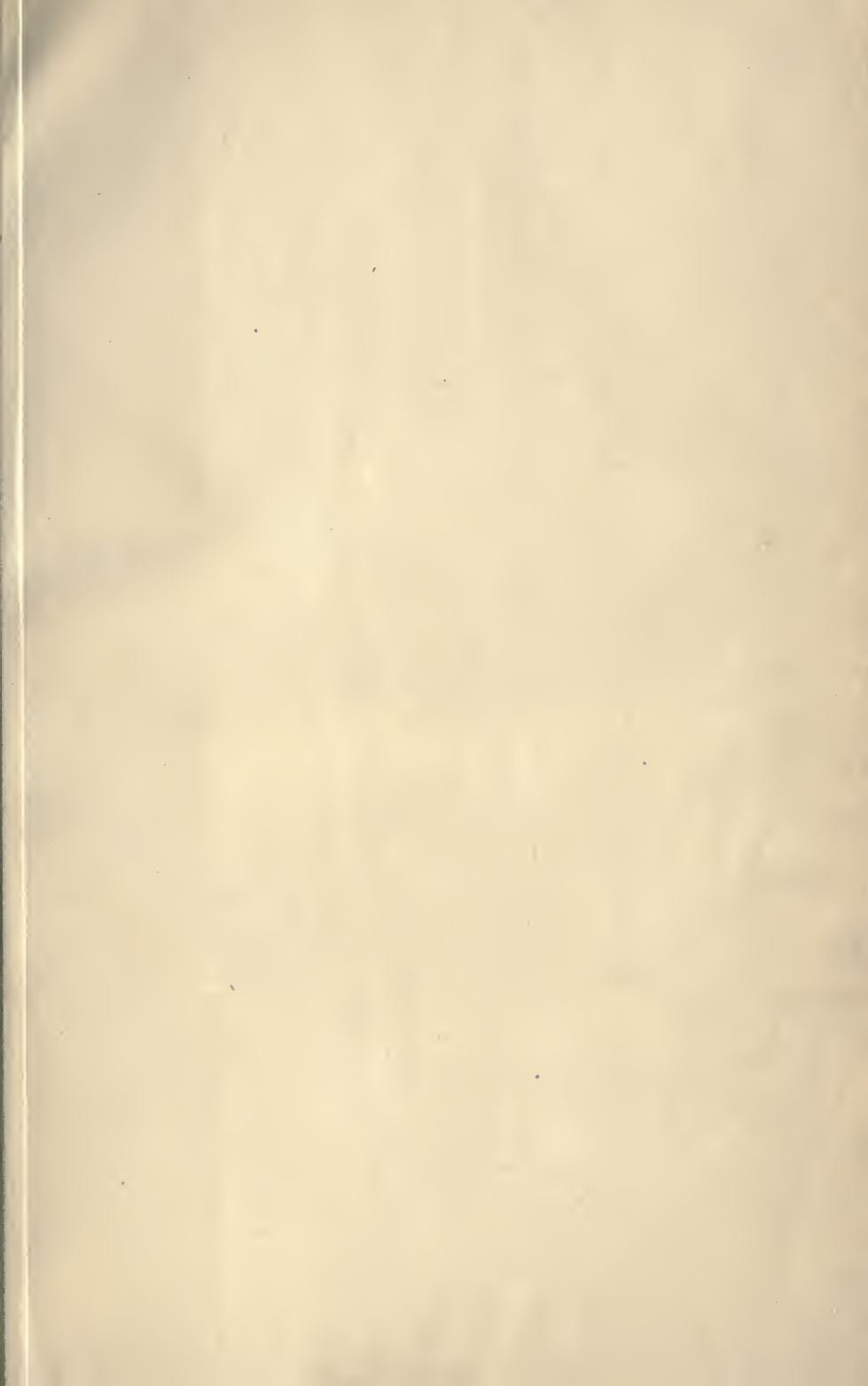
How shall we escape? For nearly twenty years our country has been the theater and victim of passion, panic, and war, with a continuous procession of commercial and social disasters of remarkable significance. That we exist to-day as a free, united, and prosperous people is the grand marvel of human history. The worst, thanks to God, is over if we are but true to our traditions.

We know that the situation is essentially changed; confidence is in large measures restored. We are gaining in all directions. Enterprise if hesitant is wakeful and waiting for a just public sentiment in respect to the currency. Our matchless natural resources North and South become daily more and more visible and impressive to the whole world. We have three hundred millions of gold in sight to-day, according to a very late estimate of the Chamber of Commerce of New York. Some faithful and industrious men in our large towns are without work and without money, but the number steadily diminishes and is not now formidable, the assertion of all demagogues to the contrary notwithstanding. A large number of visionary speculators scattered all over the country, for whom Congress has been speaking for ten years, are hopelessly ruined and beyond the reach of legislation. What, then, can Congress do? It can stop tinkering the currency and leave it alone.

I think that it is abundantly apparent that the commerce of our country can never enjoy a healthy equilibrium while Congress continues to debate political schemes for financial renovation which are opposed to experience and the commercial sense. We have tried it for a dozen years, and find, for example, that resumption of specie payments has come against the will of Congress and in spite of ad-

verse legislation. We find, also, at this very moment and in the Forty-sixth Congress, more discordant currency theories and greater confusion of extravagant ideas than has existed in any previous Congress since greenbacks were first issued. It is our duty to look this fact square in the face. I am confident that there is not one candid and thoughtful member of the House of Representatives to dispute this proposition. Consider now that the unity of sentiment among the jurists and statesmen of the whole country, including both of the great political parties, was equally pronounced in respect to the danger of such issues when first resorted to, and we are in a position to see the drift of affairs and the perils which confront us. Have we not at length reached a crisis? Must not currency agitation be wrested from the Halls of Congress, or our country given over to the wildest epoch of irredeemable paper money in human history? Has not the greenback poison penetrated politics? Has it not divided and demoralized the democratic party? Is there not enough of silence and hesitation among republicans, who want high office, to show that the country's salvation depends upon the judiciary? Having myself watched the currents and eddies of this great struggle in Congress for five years, I am thoroughly convinced that if it be lawful, under our Constitution, to issue legal-tender greenbacks in time of peace, the minister from Indiana [Mr. DE LA MATYR] leads the winning party. He will in such case get his thousand millions, and others coming later will get perhaps a hundred thousand millions. For the present the people will countenance nothing to break down resumption, but in the first exigency, which may not be far off, they will be found consenting to new issues of legal-tenders, if authority for such issues be found in the Constitution.

My prayer to Congress, in the name of the people, is, please let the currency alone. Give us peace, rest, and liberty to prosper. [Applause.]





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